IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at line 19 on page 11 in the specification with the following replacement paragraph:

— A further requirement on the placement of a root port is that no perimeter port of a switch within the ISP core network ~~104~~ 102 be chosen as a root port. Even if the root switch is inside the perimeter of the ISP core network ~~104~~102, it is possible when large chains of switches are involved, that the path from a root port on the perimeter in a switch inside the perimeter to another switch inside the perimeter will pass through a switch outside of the perimeter. This error condition is avoided by preventing a perimeter port from being chosen as a root port. —

Please replace the paragraph beginning at line 5 on page 16 in the specification with the following replacement paragraph:

— 3. If the root ID's and the costs are equal, ~~than~~ then C1 is better than C2~~;~~ if the transmitting L2 switch ID listed in C1 is numerically lower than the transmitting switch ID listed in C2. —

Please replace the paragraph beginning at line 19 on page 17 in the specification with the following replacement paragraph:

— For example, port "3" 608 is established as a root guard (RG) port, as ~~has also~~ is port "5" 612, and port "7" 616, etc. The "root guard" status of ports 608, 612, and 616

are indicated by the blocks containing the indicia RG, for example, block 608A for port "3", block 612A for port "5", and block 616A for port "7", etc. —

Please replace the paragraph beginning at line 5 on page 18 in the specification with the following replacement paragraph:

— The rationale for transferring the root guarded port into "blocked" state in the event that the spanning tree protocol selects it as a root port is that the root guarded ports are the boundary ports between the core network 102 and external networks such as customer networks. In the event that a boundary port is selected as a root port, it may mean that the root L2 switch is outside of the core network 102, or it may mean that the root switch is inside of the ISP core network and a perimeter port has been chosen as a root port. In either event the port is set into "blocked" state. —